



HIGHPOINTERS CLUB

APEX TO ZENITH NEWSLETTER

Keep Klimbin'!

Fourth Quarter 2017 Issue #119



Rainier Sunrise -
Frank Sutman

300th Completer!

7-13-1936 - A.H. Marshall - 1st to complete the 48 States

7-1-1966 - Vin Hoeman - 1st to complete the 50 States

7-28-2000 - Dennis Stewart - 100th Completer

8-11-2009 - Phil Boyer - 200th Completer

10-22-2017 - Tony Cobb - 300th Completer

In this Issue:

50 Completers: Steve Eilerstson,
Nigel Roberts, Joan Zardus

48 Finishers: Brian Council, John Lemberg,
Norman Michaels, Don Smalley

Highpoints Ranked by Difficulty - Updated

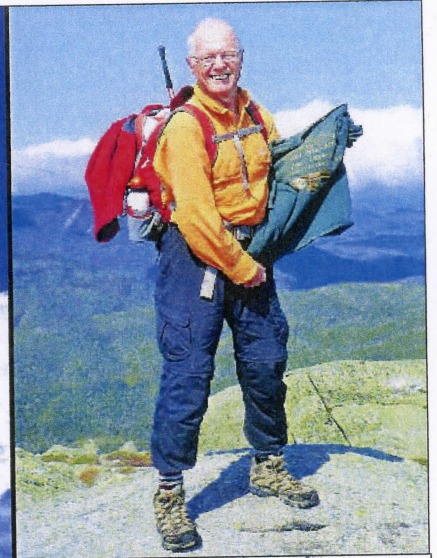
Canada - Len Vanderstar is 3rd Completer

"My Experience on a Guided Climb"

and the NEW highpoint of Virginia confirmed!



50 Completer Steve Eilertson (right) and John Iverson (climbing partner and fellow Highpointer) after reaching the summit of Gannett Peak WY on August 5, 2012.



50 Completer Nigel Roberts on his first (AK) and last (NY), twenty years apart, showing his New Zealand university t-shirt (30 years as professor of political science). IL was his 49th HP with son Evan, grandson Simon, and wife Heather.



Thumbs up Joan Zardus. She completed the 50 at age 78 in 2017 with Irene Leavitt (33 HPs and counting), and is shown on Alaska's highest point at age 49 in 1988.

50 Completers

The Southern Hemisphere Has a Completer in Nigel Roberts

When I reached the summit of Mt Marcy on Sunday, September 10, 2017, I became (so far as can be determined) the first-ever Southern Hemisphere resident to complete the ascent of all 50 state highpoints in the USA. Given that I live in New Zealand, I've often been asked what on Earth led me to become a US highpointer. The answer goes back a long way.

As a child, I lived in South Africa for 13 years, and that's where I learnt to love mountains and climbing. At the age of 15, I hitch-hiked 6,000 miles from Johannesburg to northern Tanganyika and back, and attempted to climb Mt Kilimanjaro. I failed to get to the top then, but did so in 1985. The following year, the book "Seven Summits" – by **Dick Bass, Frank Wells, and Rick Ridgeway** – was published. I bought it and read it avidly several times, and it led to the formulation of a personal climbing goal: I wanted to climb at least three-and-a-half of the continental seven summits – that is, at least three of the six-highest of the seven summits, plus Australia's Mt Kosciuszko (which, as a New Zealander, I jokingly call a half-summit, because it's a mere 7,309 feet above sea-level). In 1994 I climbed both Mt Elbrus (Europe's highest mountain) and Aconcagua (the highest peak in South America).

Three years later I decided to push the boundaries of my goal and attempt Denali. Of all the climbs I've ever done, it's the one of which I am the most proud: on Sunday, July 6, 1997, I stood on Denali's 20,320-foot high summit and (instead of a flag) held up a t-shirt from the New Zealand university where I worked as a professor of political science.

Seven years later, my research as a political scientist took me to the United States to study the 2004 presidential election, and my son and his American fiancé, who were then both graduate students at the University of Minnesota, took me to the state's "north shore" and on a cold but crystal-clear November day the three of us hiked to the top of Eagle Mountain. I was intrigued to learn that while the highest mountain in

Minnesota was only the 37th highest state highpoint, it nevertheless ranked as the 18th hardest to climb. Hmmm, I wondered, what are the ten highest US state highpoints, and what are rated as the ten hardest to climb?

In view of the facts that my son was marrying a US citizen and that the two of them intended to live in the USA, I knew I'd be returning to the United States fairly frequently. As a result, I formulated a new climbing goal: to climb the 13 state highpoints that include the ten hardest and the ten highest. The 13 peaks are also the 13 highest US state highpoints (ranging from Denali down to Mt Hood). With Denali done, my new goal meant that I had 12 mountains to climb.

I wasn't getting any younger, of course, so gave top priority to climbing the hardest peaks. In 2006 I climbed Gannett and Granite (on one list they are ranked as the second- and third-hardest state highpoints respectively). On Gannett Peak, I met **Carl Lohmann** and **Rob Suero**, who introduced me to the Highpointers Club, and I've been a keen member of the club since then.

In 2007, I persuaded my Australian climbing partner, **Eric Hodge**, to join me on my quest, and together we climbed the remaining ten of the 13 hardest/highest highpoints on my list: Rainier '07, Elbert & Hood '09, Kings & Borah '10, Wheeler, Humphreys, Boundary, Whitney '12, and Mauna Kea '14. I am eternally grateful to Eric for his support, encouragement, and friendship.

In "Apex to Zenith" #80, a paragraph about my 13-peak highpointing goal concluded prophetically, "What shall we bet that Nigel ends up doing all 50!?" Well, "Apex to Zenith" was right, and in 2013 I embarked on the first of a series of seven multi-peak road trips in order to ascend the remaining US state highpoints. **Charlie & Diane Winger's** book, "Highpoint Adventures: The Complete Guide to the 50 State Highpoints" was my constant companion. Never has any other book I've ever owned been quite so thoroughly thumbed.

My first highpointing road trip was in August 2013. My daughter-in-law's

father, **John Fitch**, and I successfully tackled White Butte, Harney Peak (since renamed Black Elk Peak), and Hawkeye Point. Ten days later I visited Campbell Hill, and towards the end of the month I went on a New England road trip and soloed Jerimoth Hill, the south shoulder of Mt Frissell, Mt Greylock, Mt Mansfield, Mt Washington, and Mt Katahdin. In the spring of 2014, I went on a two-week road trip that encompassed Taum Sauk, Magazine, Woodall, Cheaha, Britton, and Driskill.

In late-October 2014, I broke my leg rather badly in a climbing accident in New Zealand, but recovered well enough to resume highpointing on an October-November 2015 road trip that included Brasstown Bald, Sassafras Mountain, Mt Mitchell, Clingmans Dome, Mt Rogers, Black Mountain, and Spruce Knob.

A September-October 2016 road trip enabled me to visit / climb Panorama Point, Mt Sunflower, Black Mesa, and Guadalupe Peak. A second 2016 road trip – undertaken at the end of October and the beginning of November – began with a failed attempt on Mt Marcy. Deep snow and poor visibility meant that when I was only about a quarter of a mile from the summit, I turned round and headed back down the mountain to the safety of the Adirondack Loj. After that, though, everything went to plan and I visited four more state highpoints: High Point NJ, Ebright Azimuth, Mt Davis, and Backbone Mountain. My tally of successful ascents was now 45.

A solo swing through the mid-west in August 2017 enabled me to "tick off" Hoosier Hill, Mt Arvon, and Timms Hill. With 48 highpoints under my belt, the last two were particularly special: on Saturday, September 2, my wife **Heather**, our son **Evan**, and our almost four-year-old son and grandson **Simon** hiked up to the top of Charles Mound – bringing Evan's highpoint tally to 4, Heather's and Simon's to one, and mine to 49.

All that remained was a return trip to Mt Marcy, and on a gloriously sunny Sunday – accompanied by Heather who came almost all the way to the top with me – I finally reached the summit of my

50th US state highpoint. My quest – which "Apex to Zenith" had predicted I would embark on before even I realized I would – was over.

As a result of my US highpointing quest, I have visited places I might never otherwise have seen – such as the Grand Canyon, Yellowstone, Vicksburg, Gettysburg, Frank Lloyd Wright's Fallingwater, literally dozens of US state capitol buildings, and a host of presidential libraries and museums. My highpointing adventures mean that although I'm poorer financially, I am – at the same time – immensely richer in all other respects.